



Office of the City Manager
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September 11, 2020

Dear Eau Claire Community Members:

The tragic death of George Floyd has focused the world's attention on policing in the United States. The shooting of Jacob Blake has deepened these concerns. Essential questions are being asked about the role of systemic racism in perpetuating a cycle of violence, law enforcement policies, and more broadly the role of police in society. Challenges to assumptions are necessary as structures such as the justice system in many instances have failed to safeguard peace and freedom. This has been a time of introspection, a time to listen, and a time for action to prevent practices that adversely impact the community we have sworn to protect.

On June 15, 2020, we made a "Commitment to our Community" to affirm our ongoing efforts and outline new initiatives to strengthen the trust our community places in the Eau Claire Police Department. Since making this *Commitment* there has been constructive and meaningful action. These improvements have been made possible not only by the men and women of the Eau Claire Police Department, but also with the quality and care of our community. Eau Claire residents have voiced concern, shared personal experience and directly contributed to progress.

Through this process, we have identified the *Four Pillars of Eau Claire Policing* that provide a foundation for the trust and legitimacy needed for the department to be successful. These *Four Pillars* are our Policing Philosophy, Training and Education, Policy and Oversight and Transparency. We are pleased to offer this progress report on the improvements within each of these *Four Pillars*.

Policing Philosophy: The Eau Claire Police Department is committed to a community-policing philosophy that prioritizes partnerships and problem-solving in order to co-produce safety. We view the officer's role as a community partner and guardian of peace and freedom. The preferred officer skills are communication, collaboration and problem-solving.

Progress on Philosophy Commitment:

- Established pathways of communication with communities of color and disenfranchised populations through listening sessions with community groups and individuals. We have undertaken meaningful action based on these discussions.
- Participated in community-led informal athletic events designed to strengthen relationships.
- Prioritized community engagement over strict enforcement activities through an increase of bike patrol and neighborhood foot patrols.
- Reinforced policing as a civilian function during protest events by collaborating with organizers to create a safe and welcoming environment absent aggressive equipment and police tactics. These cooperative efforts safeguard the peaceful exercise of constitutional rights.

Training and Education: The Eau Claire Police Department will continue to provide continuing education to all officers beyond mandated requirements. We prioritize training on topics such as bias, fair and impartial policing practices and de-escalation strategies.

Progress Report on Training and Education Commitment:

- Expanded annual continuing education programs to provide a structure to better support training on topics such as bias, anti-racism and best policing practices.
- Increased evidence-based crisis intervention training from a 40-hour base course to also include ongoing quarterly training exercises.
- Implemented scenario-based training that supports our policy requiring an officer to intervene when witnessing misconduct by another officer.
- Expanded partnerships with community organizations such as the Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association to provide training aimed at improving cultural comprehension.

Policy and Oversight: In order to ensure proper accountability, it is imperative to have strong policy and oversight. The Eau Claire Police Department will utilize model policies and procedures developed by nationally recognized experts. Policies are subjected to ongoing review, in constructive dialogue with those internal and external to the organization of diverse and varied perspective, expertise and experience. We engage and train our officers in such best practices.

Progress Report on Policy and Oversight Commitment:

- Implemented over 20 policy updates which include, but are not limited to, adding a sanctity of life statement, greater emphasis on de-escalation strategies, banned chokeholds, strict limits on immediate entry search warrants, additional requirements to activate recording and documentation technology and prohibit the obscuring or cessation of this technology during an incident.
- Established a use of force review process that emphasizes accountability, de-escalation training and creates a framework for continual improvement through data-driven strategies.
- Initiated efforts with our law enforcement partners to develop systems for collecting and analyzing race-specific data on traffic stops, field interviews and arrests.
- Collaborated with Eau Claire City Council and City Staff to accelerate the implementation of body-worn camera systems, in direct response to community input.

Transparency: The Eau Claire Police Department will be transparent and open with the public we serve. Transparency is an important component to strengthening trust. It is necessary to have guidelines and systems for citizen comments, complaints and inquiries. Whenever practical, information will be made available to the public to promote transparency.

Progress Report on Transparency Commitment:

- Department members have participated in numerous community events, virtual townhalls and peaceful demonstrations. Department members presented on Eau Claire Police Department policies, practices and answered questions from community members.
- Developed and kept current a webpage that addresses frequently asked questions about the department's budget, policies and practices.
- Added links to the department webpage to provide easy access to make a citizen complaint, comment or compliment regarding the department or an officer.
- Established a webpage that contains a listing of total calls for police service sorted by neighborhood that also contains a narrative summary of noteworthy incidents. This feature is linked to multiple social media platforms to create ease of access.
- Actively working with community members to develop a regional anti-racism effort called the "Transformation Project" with the goal of becoming the most inclusive and affirming community for all people.

Effective policing requires intentional efforts to strengthen trust as well as support from the community. The contributions from our community to these improvements came in many forms, which include City Council work sessions, community forums, individual meetings and diligent work by other City Staff. Trust is built through individual and institutional actions. Despite these accomplishments, our efforts towards betterment are not complete. We are committed to continual improvement through constructive dialogue with fellow community members.

It is an honor for the men and women of the Eau Claire Police Department to serve everyone who lives and works in our community. At great risk of life and livelihood, our officers accept the responsibility to protect others. We take these obligations seriously and strive to be a trusted police organization. We cannot achieve these goals alone. With your help, we can continue to ensure a safe and engaged community with an exceptional quality of life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Dale Peters", written over a horizontal line.

Dale Peters
City Manager

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Matt Rokus", written over a horizontal line.

Matt Rokus
Chief of Police